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HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ANY method to be employed in teaching history, like any method to be employed in teaching any other subject, must depend ultimately on the educational end towards which the teacher looks. And the educational aim of any one subject cannot properly be dissociated from the aim of education as a whole. Thus the value of any one subject as an educational factor will be great or small according as it helps strongly or feebly towards the main end of education. Now we take it that the great aim of education is "complete living," which means, in the last analysis, to be useful and to be happy. To be useful means to be of service to one's self and to others. When, then, the educational environment surrounding a man has resulted in developing his physical and mental abilities to their fullest capacity for service and has left him happy in their use, the highest and finest aim has been secured.

Accepting, then, service and happiness as our aims let us proceed to examine (1) what the possibility of attaining these aims rests on ; (2) what value historical study may have when tested with these aims in view. It will then be clear (1) whether history should be taught at all, or not ; (2) what method to employ in case we answer the first question in the affirmative.

Perfected capacity for service means power, but man does not submit to training, nor does he use his power when acquired, without some inducement. The possibilities of usefulness and happiness, therefore, depend on acquired power, and this in turn on incentives to effort. But the incentives furnished by any subject depend on its content, and the incentives furnished by the content cannot be made to act effectively unless permanent interest be aroused. Thus content and interest provide for us the tests by means of which we can determine educational values and decide upon our methods.

The subjects generally included in formal education are lit-

erature, history, philosophy, art, science, mathematics, and manual training. Of these the first four embody ethical ideals — “beauty, honor, duty, love” — these are the highest ideals of the race and furnish the most powerful incentives which have ever influenced human action. The other subjects have either no, or only slight ethical content, and, even when accompanied by interest, have never furnished stimuli for action at all comparable with those furnished by the first four. It seems clear, then, that history has a place in that set of subjects whose educational value is to be regarded as highest for the reason that they provide for us the highest incentives. It remains to consider what the particular content of history is, what incentives it contains, and finally how interest may be aroused and these incentives be brought to bear in order to develop power (*i. e.*, capacity for service) and happiness.

History lacks the powerful imaginative content of literature, the rational content of philosophy, and the æsthetic ideals of art; but it is the story of human life with all its hopes, struggles, defeats, and victories; it sets before us the highest actual examples of honor, of courage, of self-denial, and of achievement; it involves the rise and fall of principles, the influence of environment, change of morals, the development of literature and art; it notes for us the relentless nature and the wide reach of the evil which dogs the steps of human error; it portrays the incessant struggle between right and wrong, and while leaving us in no doubt as to the final triumph of the former, warns us of the eternal necessity for vigilance. It seems needless to assert that a content like this is full of powerful incentives, nor does it seem possible that it can be lacking in interest, but the subject nevertheless has considerable difficulty pertaining to it, and too often fails to command permanent interest. This failure is mainly due to mistakes in methods, as we shall explain, but the inherent difficulty is, paradoxically, both an obstacle and an incentive, an incentive which in this case is more practical than ethical. To make this clear it will be necessary to examine the content of history more closely. This necessity is the greater inasmuch as we are persuaded that any

method not based on a consideration of the matter to which we refer, will fail to rouse interest and fail also to meet the inherent difficulty the subject presents.

The two most prominent forms of human reasoning are induction and deduction. The former proceeds from ascertained facts to incontestable generalization; the latter, dealing with certain premises, arrives at sure conclusions. But, while these are the most prominent, they are not by any means the most common forms of reasoning. By far the larger part of our reasoning deals with data of which we are not and cannot be sure, and arrives at conclusions which are only probable. Mr. Sully says: "The great region of probability is human action, the motives which determine it, and its results. It is always hazardous to say that man must have acted from a given motive; or that a certain plan of action, involving a coöperation of other minds, will in a particular case be followed by a definite result. This being so, reasoning about probabilities takes place by combining a number of considerations. . . . In all such cases the mind is called on to consider a number of circumstances and the principle applicable to them, and to decide according to the preponderance of evidence on one side or the other, and in some cases even to suspend judgment altogether." This is illustrated forcibly in the region of personal conduct, which, if rational and wise, is only to be decided upon after consideration of attendant circumstances including the possibility of this or that result and the "comparative advantages and disadvantages of this or that course of action."

Now the content of history partakes of precisely this character. It deals with men, their deeds, and their motives. Even when the deeds and facts are certain the play of motive is obscure. We can never place ourselves in the exact environment of these men of the past, and therefore can never be sure of all which influenced them to their conclusions. All our reasoning concerning them is probable, as was also theirs concerning the data with which they had to do. They were men like ourselves and quite as hard to understand as our fellow-men today. Therein lies the difficulty of the subject, but therein lies also its

inestimable use as well as the possibility of an intensely human interest.

If the above be thoroughly understood it is no longer strange that young people so often fail to develop an interest in this subject. Successful reasoning on probabilities is only possible after the accumulation of sufficient data for comparison. Immature minds do not possess these data. Any attempt to force this side of historical study upon the young mind either too early or too fast simply defeats itself. A youth cannot become interested in what he cannot understand. Persistence in this effort will almost certainly cause a distaste which may be permanent and is sure to be hard to overcome. It is for this reason that with very young children the subject should be commenced in the form of stories and biographical sketches. As maturity increases the other and really valuable parts can be brought slowly forward with increasing interest and with rapid accumulation of power.

The fault of the ordinary method has been excessive reliance on mere memory. Facts whose relations are only dimly seen, if at all, cannot be easily held and would be of little value if they could, for they fail to develop interest. Such a method can never bring to bear the strong incentives the subject contains and therefore can never help to the accumulation of power.

The present condition of the subject is chaotic. It is taught unscientifically, at wrong times, and not continuously enough to permit of bringing its incentives to bear effectively. It may be advantageously begun (in the form of stories and biographical sketches) when the child begins to read and should be continuous, or recurrent, in this form up to the age of ten or twelve. This is the period for collecting data, not yet correlated, of course, for the child is young, but full of inspiring ideals chiefly ethical in character. When the age above mentioned is reached the method of instruction should commence to change. The child is now mature enough to form and express opinions of some value and to enjoy doing it. This is the period during which training in probable reasoning and the formation of opinions should go on. When the student has arrived at the time

for leaving the secondary school his mind has very nearly reached the limits of its physical growth and the period for original investigation and comparative study has arrived. It is to considerations of methods as applied to the second of these periods that the balance of this paper is to be devoted.

Detailed methods of teaching will, of course, depend on the immediate result sought. In this case the ends are four: (1) To provide information, (2) to rouse interest, (3) to develop incentives, and (4) to accumulate power. So far as the general process is concerned, it may proceed in two ways—extensively or intensively. The former method avoids details and aims at broad views. The facts it deals with are prominent, their relations easily seen, and the generalization to be drawn fairly plain. It gives the outlines of the picture which later and more intensive study can fill in. This is the method to begin with. It is, further, the main method to be followed during this whole period. Intensive study is the main characteristic of college and university work, but it is not to be wholly omitted in the period we are considering. In the latter part of secondary school work, when accumulated data, increased maturity, and practice in comparison warrant, some portion of the historical field should be selected and examined in detail. The student is in this way approaching the methods of genuine historical research, all the incentives the subject can furnish begin to come into play, and the keenest interest is aroused as power increases.

Work like this cannot be done without proper materials. No single text-book should be relied upon; a variety should be within the student's reach. Standard authorities should also be available, and copies of original documents so far as they can be procured. Atlases, maps, outline maps, photographs, and other illustrative materials should be provided in sufficient quantities.

We are now prepared to explain the details of the method. For the sake of clearness we will take a concrete example. We will suppose the class to be at work upon that part of Roman history included under the topic of "The Second Punic War." The arrangement of subtopics and references in the pupil's note-

book, as obtained from his teacher, would stand somewhat as follows :

I. *General Topic*.¹—The Second Punic War. 1. *Special Topic*.²—Events between the crossing of the Pyrenees and the battle of Cannae. A. *References*.³—1. *Text-books, Brief Histories* : Allen, *History of Rome*, ch. 9 ; Church, *Story of Carthage*, Pt. 4, ch. 5–10 ; Creighton, *History of Rome* (Primer), ch. 3 ; Gilman, *Story of Rome*, ch. 10 ; Leighton, *History of Rome*, Anal, 18 ; Sheldon, *General History*, pp. 152–169. 2. *Larger Histories* : Arnold, *History of Rome*, Vol. III, ch. 43 ; Dodge, *Great Captains*, “Hannibal,” ch. 11–27 ; How and Leigh, *History of Rome*, ch. 20, 21 ; Ihne, *History of Rome*, Vol. II, Book IV, ch. 8 ; Merivale, *General History of Rome*, ch. 19, 20 ; Momsen, *History of Rome*, Vol. II, Book III, ch. 4, 5 ; Shuchburgh, *History of Rome*, ch. 22, 23.

II. *Topic for Special Written Work*.⁴—The passage of the Alps.

III. *Topic for Discussion*.—Hannibal’s reasons for not attacking Rome immediately after the battle of Trasymenus.

IV. *Map Work*.—Draw a map of Italy and locate on it : 1. Hannibal’s route from the Alps to Cannae ; 2. All the important places, towns, streams, and mountains concerned with the topic.

With these topics and references in hand, the pupil “reads up” in the various text-books, and makes his notes or abstracts from the references given. The atlases and maps help him to locate routes and fix places, while the illustrative material at his command aids his constructive imagination by enabling him to picture more clearly scenes, customs, and persons. If the work be properly done, he comes into class prepared for a test which will aim at ascertaining not his memory mainly, but his power. This test may be somewhat as follows : (1) A rapid “quiz” on facts ; (2) short abstracts of readings, read in class ; (3) fluent recitations ; (4) written recitations ; (5) topical analysis ; (6) discussion of doubtful points ; (7) complete written exposition of some assigned topic. He is not likely to be called on all these points, but he will be ready on all, and all these forms will be in constant use in class work, the exact emphasis each day

¹ That is, for the week, or fortnight, or other time spent on the topic.

² That is, for the day.

³ The teacher points out the order of preference, and the pupil reads what time and circumstances permit.

⁴ To be written out before recitation and read in class (see 7 below).

depending on the character of the topic dealt with. Meanwhile teacher and classmates are watching, and, at the proper moments, criticising facts, reasoning, and language used.

The items of the above list will all doubtless be readily understood except perhaps (3) and (4). By "fluent recitation" is meant a complete statement given orally without interruption on the part of the teacher or classmates. By "written recitation" is meant a short exercise requiring some thought, written off-hand in the class on some subject given out as new at the time. Instances of subjects suitable for one or the other of these would be "The Passage of the Rhone," "The Battle of Cannae," "The Policy of the Cunctator," "The Conduct of the Roman Allies."

The example thus elaborated is extensive in character, but the method which it illustrates is applicable to both extensive and intensive study, the difference being that in the latter case the investigation is more minute and the criticism more searching.

We maintain that such a method has the following advantages: (1) It fixes facts easily and firmly because their relations are appreciated; (2) it develops the student's power of exact and lucid oral and written expression; (3) it teaches him to use books, to collect, compare, and arrange data; (4) it gives constant training in the art of balancing probabilities, and thus enables him to form opinions which are not only intelligent but also intelligible and defensible; and (5) finally and chiefly, all the powerful incentives of the subject are brought to bear upon him in the most effective way.

Such advantages, since they mean a large increase in the exact kind of power (*i. e.* capacity for service) needed in all the relations of life, can only end in greater usefulness and happiness, and these assist in reaching what we began by asserting to be the ultimate end of education—"complete living."

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